

Letters from Romania 1996

Postcard dated January 9, 1996

Dear Mother and Daddy,

I'm in Vienna now. During the seven hours I had in Amsterdam, I took a short tour of the city, just enough to get a hint of the major attractions. I took a bus here to Vienna from Budapest, and stayed in an inexpensive youth hostel. So, anyway I'm safe, well, and getting some more sightseeing accomplished before I return to Romania.

Love, Browder

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January 16, 1996

Dear Mother, Daddy, Grandpa, et al,

Well, obviously I arrived here OK last week. During my seven hour wait in the airport in Amsterdam, I took the opportunity to tour the city a couple of hours before catching the airplane to Budapest. From Budapest, I couldn't help but take a bus to Vienna, Austria. I spent two days in Vienna before heading back to Budapest, then to Romania. The long ride from Budapest home was uneventful except for some Romanian soldiers at the border who tried to make me pay a bribe to enter the country. I refused, and they went away, probably to find some other Westerners to try to intimidate.

I spoke to the school teacher about the money the church gave to build the stove in her school. She'll make the necessary arrangements. When it is finished and time to pay for it, I'll give her the money. I'll keep you posted.

Mother, I forgot to post a cash machine withdrawal of \$100 in December, and \$50 in January. Please add these to my record. Also, Mother, I was unable to contact the State of Florida Department of Education. Can you call Information, find the number, then call it and see if they can tell you anything about the "Great Florida Teach-in"? It's an enormous statewide teachers' fair held in the summer. Hopefully they'll know what you're talking about.

This is our first week of class's for the new term. I couldn't teach the first day though because I've come down with the flu. By the time you get this, I will be over it, certainly.

Love to all, Browder

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January 24, 1996

Dear Mother, Daddy, and Grandpa,

I have been trying and trying to call you, to no avail. I imagine that you have been trying to do the same. It appears that there is simply no electronic means by which we can communicate with each other. The only way is by letter, unless I journey to Hungary to call you (a 12 hour train ride)!

I have been very concerned about weather reports in Pennsylvania. What's the damage there? Your house is on fairly high ground, but the church is not. So what has happened? I'll keep trying to call you. Please write me and tell me as soon as possible!

I am over the flu now, and I've had no health problems other than that. Phyllis and I haven't been to the hospital to visit the babies because the hospital is closed to the public. Too many people are in the hospital sick with the flu, it seems, and there's no point in allowing visitors in to spread it around.

Again, I have been trying fruitlessly to call you know, but I'll keep trying. In the meantime, write me and let me know what has happened there. A letter is better than no communication at all.

Love to all, Browder

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March 5, 1996

Dear Mother, Daddy, and Grandpa,

Sorry it's taken me so long to write. Hopefully I'll finish this and send it off today.

My trip to the republic of Moldova ("Moldavia") went very well. On Sunday February 18th I went to Bucharest, and Monday February 19th I got a tourist visa from the Moldovan consulate. From Bucharest I took a train to Iasi (pronounced YAH-SH). The next day I bought a train ticket to Chisinau (pronounced KI-shen-oh), and left that night. Iasi is very near the border to Moldova, so it didn't take long for the train to arrive at the border. The train was at the border for three hours, for customs and immigration formalities (suspicious Moldovan customs officials carefully examined every last item I packed), and wheel changing (Romanian tracks are a different gauge than those in the former U.S.S.R.) Once they got the bogies changed, though, we were off to Chisinau. We arrived at 8:30 a.m., so I had the whole first day to explore. I found a hotel, then I went looking for the University. Two years ago at NAU, there was a visiting Fulbright scholar from the University of Chisinau at our English department. We had talked about her country, and when I told her that I was going to Romania, she insisted that I come visit. How could I refuse?

Some students showed me the way to the university, where I found her. The remaining two days I spent mostly talking to her and her students about their country, their life here, et cetera in addition to seeing what sites there are in Chisinau. It was an enjoyable trip. I had wanted to see some parts of the former U.S.S.R., and now I've done it, although only a very small part. I may go to the Ukraine in June.

Where to next? How about Bulgaria?! By the time you get this, I'll be making plans to depart to Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. I include with this letter a tentative itinerary. I plan to spend a few days in Thessolonika, Greece also. I doubt that I will have time to visit Istanbul this journey, unfortunately. I got the use hostel guide, thanks. Unfortunately it has no information about hostels in Greece. But, I do have an address of a place in Thessolonika, anyway. Mother, have you found any information about the Florida Teach-in?

Love to all, Browder